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## Socio-Culture Strengthening Strategy in Character Building through the Inventorization of Minahasa Local Proverbs

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**Abstract:** The preservation of local culture faces significant challenges in the era of globalization, where the Fourth Industrial Revolution profoundly influences human life. Various factors contribute to the erosion of local cultures, with one of the primary factors being the diminishing interest in local issues such as languages, songs, dances, and other cultural elements. Across most Indonesian regions, the use of local languages, a vital heritage of local culture, has significantly declined. This concerning trend is evident in the Minahasan community like Tonsea. Consequently, the study of Minahasan proverbs has become a priority. This research aims to elucidate the significance of Tonsea proverbs as a socio-cultural strategy in character building. The method employed in this study is descriptive qualitative, incorporating a hermeneutic approach. The research results reveal thirty proverbs, considered oral literature, that encapsulate indigenous and invaluable values. These proverbs are deeply rooted in the Tonsea culture context, showcasing profound wisdom and values that are instrumental in character development. This study underscores the importance of preserving and promoting these proverbs as a means of preserving Tonsea's cultural heritage in the face of contemporary challenges posed by globalization and rapid technological advancements.

**Key words:** socio-culture, character building, proverbs, tonsea local language

**Abstrak:** Pelestarian budaya lokal menghadapi tantangan signifikan di era globalisasi, di mana Revolusi Industri Keempat secara mendalam mempengaruhi kehidupan manusia. Berbagai faktor menyebabkan pengikisan budaya lokal, salah satunya adalah menurunnya minat terhadap isu-isu lokal seperti bahasa, lagu, tarian, dan unsur-unsur budaya lainnya. Di sebagian besar wilayah Indonesia, penggunaan bahasa daerah, yang merupakan warisan budaya lokal yang penting, telah menurun secara signifikan. Tren yang mengkhawatirkan ini juga terlihat di komunitas Minahasa. Hal inilah yang mendasari dilakukannya studi mengenai pepatah Minahasa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan pentingnya pepatah lokal Minahasa sebagai strategi sosial-budaya dalam pembentukan karakter. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan hermeneutik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan ada tiga puluh pepatah, sebagai sastra lisan, yang mencakup nilai-nilai asli dan berharga. Pepatah-pepatah ini sangat terkait dengan konteks budaya Tonsea, yang menunjukkan kearifan dan nilai-nilai yang berharga dan sangat penting dalam pembentukan karakter. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya melestarikan dan mempromosikan pepatah-pepatah ini sebagai cara untuk menjaga warisan budaya Minahasa

*di tengah tantangan kontemporer yang ditimbulkan oleh globalisasi dan kemajuan teknologi yang cepat.*

**Kata kunci:** *social budaya, pembentukan karakter, pepatah, bahasa daerah tonsea*

## INTRODUCTION

Some individuals dismiss the importance of culture, considering it irrelevant and outdated in the modern era. Among the various facets of culture, language stands out as a crucial element. However, when juxtaposed with fields like technology and business, culture often garners significantly less interest, particularly among younger generations. This lack of enthusiasm is evident in the declining number of young people who can speak or comprehend local languages. Consequently, when faced with individuals conversing in local languages, many young generations find themselves feeling uncomfortable and then leaving the conversation. Local languages are no longer considered important to learn and use as a means of communication, even within the local community. Therefore, it marginalizes local languages, causing them to become completely lost.

The introduction researchers gave above is still an assumption that feels like a prophecy, but that does not mean it is unreasonable. Let us examine an article published by *Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa*, which states that by the end of the 21st century, approximately 1,500 of the world's languages are expected to be extinct. By following the variables used, it is estimated that around 441 languages (more than 50%) in Indonesia are at risk of extinction (Samiaji, 2024). Furthermore, 170 languages are actively spoken, and 361 languages are problematic, 80 languages are almost extinct, and 14 languages have become extinct. Some areas, such as Maluku, Papua, West Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi, are among those threatened and have even lost some of their local languages. Local languages are an important element of a community's identity and a vital shield in living an increasingly globalized life. The future of our nation is now also facing the influence, or more precisely, the invasion of Western culture in almost all areas of our lives as Indonesians (Berlianty, 2018). Local language plays a crucial role in character development in modern times. Cultural values hidden in verbal or written traditional language become preciously intangible material. It is a heritage of wisdom, as Setyawan mentioned, local language is a proof that there was a civilization of society in the past, in this context, verbal or written form (2011, p. 66). Local languages are the last wealth of a nation, serving as evidence of civilization, art, and culture, and even the existence of the nation itself, which is passed down both orally and in writing (Nacikit, 2020). It is not only our identity, but we will lose wealth when local languages are gone.

The presence of local languages is ironically diminishing in the age of rapid digital and information technology advancements. These languages are gradually fading away even in their places of origin. Specifically, in Minahasa, the use of local languages has become exceedingly rare. There are eight sub tribes of Minahasa, namely Tonsea, Tombulu, Tolour, Tontemboan, Tonsawang, Bantik, Bentenan, and Ponosakan. Among these, the first five are considered Minahasan original tribes, and the rest emerged due to the merger of people (Rambitan, 2016). The local languages of Minahasa exhibit variations based on the geographical locations of the sub-tribes, each dialect sharing both similarities and differences with others. Presently, very few young people are proficient in these languages. In some regions, even individuals in their 60s, while able to understand, cannot be considered active speakers; their ability to speak the language

has diminished. This issue is not unique and mirrors the challenges faced by several other local languages. The infrequent use of these languages has become the primary cause for their decline, resulting in the erosion of the rich heritage of local wisdom, especially the Tonsea subethnic.

Regionally, the researchers have not found any research that reveals the factors behind the decline in Tonsea local speakers, which will be the focus of this research. However, in general, the decline in local speakers in several regions of Indonesia is influenced by several factors, including the prevalence of foreign languages. Parents are currently competing to force their children, from an early age, to master foreign languages (Na'imah via Munawaroh et al., 2022, p. 4058). They may be encouraged to prepare children for higher education and employment. This is surprising because foreign languages play a very important role in the world of work. In Bakhti and Yuliah's (2018) research, it was revealed that many job advertisements currently use English narratives, sentences, or phrases

Language is a very broad spectrum, and local languages are no exception. In this research, the researchers will focus on the expressions or proverbs of the Tonsea culture in Sulawesi Utara. The existence of proverbs is interesting because the sentences conveyed have meanings that are not only limited to the text but also the context. Context or social conditions become the main driver of expression, so that proverbs not only give birth to meaning in the text but also often indicate a specific event or phenomenon at a particular time. On the one hand, the use of proverbs in communication serves specific purposes and functions, making this study important. The use of proverbs has certain meanings and functions. Therefore, it needs to be studied further to understand the intended meaning in the expressions used by speakers to their interlocutors (Busairi, 2024, p. 277).

Proverbs as a form of figurative language style in the form of sentences or groups of words that are dense, concise, simple, and contain norms, values, advice, comparisons, parables, principles, and behaviours (Busairi, 2024, p. 281; Sua et al., 2020, p. 290). So, Proverbs is one of the heritages of local wisdom; it contains messages or teachings of older people and is usually used to snap the interlocutor. The messages conveyed through sayings possess their unique qualities. Those are implied in metaphors. The structure of proverbs is also unique. Most of them are phrases, but some are in sentences. Proverbs are rich in cultural meaning, so understanding their meaning requires cultural literacy, which plays a crucial role in deciphering their significance. Cultural literacy is the initial step in a series of crucial efforts necessary for preventing proverbs from the brink of extinction. Moreover, the socio-cultural values embedded in Minahasan traditions are invaluable for character building. For these reasons, this research aims to inventory some proverbs in the Tonsea culture as a heritage of local wisdom and analyze them as one of the oral literature genres to explore the values they convey.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This research is done as an extension of previous studies that had been done on Minahasan proverbs entitled "Makna, Struktur dan Bentuk Peribahasa Tondano" by Rambitan (2016) and "Makna Budaya dalam Lirik-lirik Lagu Daerah Minahasa sebagai Kearifan Lokal di Minahasa I" by Sigarlaki (2016). Rambitan discovers the meanings, structures and forms of of Tolour proverbs. The analysis is on the linguistics discipline. Sigarlaki collects and lists some proverbs in Minahasa. Dealing with proverbs, Rambitan's research and Sigarlaki's have similarities in terms of the focus of studying proverbs. However, Rambitan limits her study on

the finding out of meaning through structure and form of proverbs in Tolour tribe's language, meanwhile Sigarlaki collects and lists some proverbs in some other Minahasan languages such as, Tonsea, Tombulu, Tontembean, Tonsawang as well as Tolour.

The research focuses on two primary investigative issues: identifying the proverbs prevalent in Tonsea culture and unravelling the significance of the proverbs based on the context of Tonsea culture. From these problems of investigation, the research purpose is to identify, classify, analyze and describe the proverbs and the function of proverbs in Tonsea culture. By doing research on proverbs, it is expected that there will be a perseverance of culture through language and oral literature.

Socio-culture refers to the interconnection between society and its culture, which are mutually dependent and inseparable. Socio-culture plays an enormous role in character building. To strengthen a society's culture means to delve into and highlight the moral ethics and values that belong to it, in order to become a model or reference for character building. Giddens (1991 as cited in Kistanto (2008, p. 2) mentioned that culture consists of the values of the members of a given group hold, the norms are definite principles or rules which people are expected to observe. Norms represent the "dos and don'ts" of social life. Thus, the norms, values, and materials produced by society guide people to live a life properly. However, generations are changing as time is. They are facing and forming new perspectives of culture. For example, the millennial generation currently are awkward with traditional heritage which are descended orally due to language gaps between different generations. Consequently, the richness of local wisdoms can hardly touch the heart of young generation.

Young generations are the pillars of society. They are the core of a society that determines the future. Therefore, good human resources will have a positive impact on society. Human resources encompass not only intelligence and creativity, but also emotional and spiritual qualities. All of these qualities can be acquired through formal education. On the other hand, not all the substantial values of a socio-cultural context can be obtained through such education, but instead through informal or non-formal education. These forms of education may not be significant, but their materials can be a source of character building. Furthermore, in the era of globalization, character development plays a crucial role. It can be the key point in the process of humanizing through culture. Character building and socioculture are assumed to be closely interconnected, and there is a significant correlation between the two. Socio-cultural factors, including cultural norms, values, traditions, and social practices, have a profound impact on the development of an individual's character. People often acquire their moral and ethical values, as well as their sense of identity and belonging, from the cultural context in which they are raised, because these values are shaped by their surroundings. Socioculture strengthens the character development relating to the norms and values of local wisdom that belong to a society. It educates society, more importantly, the young generations.

In the research entitled "Revitalization and Exploration of Local Wisdom in the Context of National Character Development, local wisdom can be understood as local ideas that are wise, full of wisdom, and morally valuable, which are embedded in and followed by the members of the community. Within local wisdom, there is also the wisdom of local culture (Santosa, 2015, p. 13) As for local cultural wisdom, it is the local knowledge that has become deeply integrated with belief systems, norms, and culture, and is expressed in traditions and myths embraced over an extended period of time. Furthermore, he stated, from a philosophical perspective, we can understand local wisdom as the indigenous knowledge systems of the local community,

characterized by their practical and experiential nature (Santosa 2015, p. 14). This practicality arises from the fact that the knowledge developed by the local community is rooted in the realities they encounter in their daily lives. Local wisdom is intricately tied to a specific culture (local culture) and serves as a reflection of the lifestyle and practices unique to a particular community (local community). Local wisdom is an integral part of and is shaped by the culture and way of life of the local community. Essentially, local wisdom is an integral part of and is shaped by the culture and way of life of the local community.

There is a strong connection between local wisdom and character development. Local wisdom refers to the traditional knowledge, values, practices, and cultural heritage that have been passed down through generations within a specific community or region. Proverbs are folk products that transmitted of generation to generation. Folklore is one of local wisdoms. It is commonly defined in terms of orally transmitted material, the term is basic to oral-formulaic and oral literature studies (Finnegan, 2003, p. 5)

The term folklore initially was used to denote the unwritten stories, beliefs, and customs of European peasantry which emerged in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The term *folklore* refers to the knowledge we have about our world and ourselves that we don't learn in school or textbooks—we learn folklore from each other. It's the informally learned, unofficial knowledge we share with our peers, families, and other groups we belong to (Sims & Stephens, 2011, p. 3) . On this point, this local knowledge plays a significant role in shaping an individual's character development. For example, many good values can be obtained through proverbs. Although proverbs are typically short, they can impart strong moral messages to its society. The moral messages contained in the proverbs can serve as a source of material in character education. Using proverbs in character education as a sociocultural strengthening strategy enriches the process by drawing upon the collective wisdoms of a culture. the history of folklore studies reveals that folklorists in many different countries have often been inspired by the desire to preserve their national heritage (Bronner, 2007, p. 56). Many things can be learnt from the heritage of local culture either artifacts or folklore, for example, songs, dances, tales, proverbs, and so on. Those are transmitted from generation to generation; from the past to the present. Invaluable heritage containing inside the forms of folklore can support the character building of the folk.

Proverbs can be found in many languages including in some local languages. The local language of Minahasa consists of five major dialects, including Tonsea, Tombulu, Tontemboan, Tolour, and Tonsawang. In each dialect contains local proverbs that can serve as a strategy for strengthening socio-cultural aspects to build the character of the younger generation. It can be achieved by analysing the meanings embedded in each local proverb. For this reason, a broad and in-depth interpretation is necessary to apply Paul Ricoeur's modern hermeneutic theory effectively. For him, every text has hidden and veiled meanings, so that it requires flexible interpretation to interpret texts or literary works that truly consist of several levels and folds (Anshari, 2009, p. 191). In practice, a researcher who wants to utilise hermeneutics must pay attention to several important procedures—first, a real reading of the object. Secondly, interpretation involves determining the signs in the text and discussing the relationship of the existing context. Third, the interpreter must recognize that all aspects related to food and ideas in the text represent an experience of non-linguistic reality (Anshari, 2009, p. 191; Suharto, 2022). Meanwhile, the researcher also aims to contribute to the understanding and exploration of the proverbs that are the subject of this study by employing semiotic theory to examine the symbols which is believed to be present in the expressions.

Semiotics is the study of signs, one of the well-known scholars who made significant contributions to semiotics is Charles Sanders Peirce. He is known for his work on semiotics, the trichotomy of signs. The conceptual framework of signs is a fundamental part of his theory and represents the relationships between signs, interpretants, and objects (Chandler, 2022, p. 29). Furthermore, Chandler continues cited Peirce's own words,

A sign . . . [in the form of a representamen] is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen (2022)

In addition to the three groups of signs, there are also three types within each of these sign groups. Icons, indexes, and symbols constitute the three categories of objects. An icon is a sign that indicates similarity or resemblance, for example: maps, miniatures, or portraits. An index is a sign that carries meaning based on a causal relationship, such as smoke as a sign of fire, footprints as a sign that someone has crossed the area, and others. A symbol is a sign 'whose special significance or fitness to represent just what it does represent lies in nothing but the very fact of there being a habit, disposition, or other effective general rule that it will be so interpreted. (Chandler 2022, p. 39).

Based on the literature review, it highlights the intricate relationship between socio-culture and character development, emphasizing the importance of local wisdoms, including proverbs, as a means of conveying moral and cultural values. The challenges of preserving culture heritage in the face of generational changes underscoring the need for innovative approaches to character building within socio-culture context.

## METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative study, which is a type of research that aims to describe or explain certain phenomena, events, or circumstances in depth and comprehensively. In this case, the focus is on the Minahasa language, especially in the Tonsea sub-ethnic group. This method emphasizes a deep understanding of certain phenomena. The data used is Proverbs from direct interviews, which were recorded and notes taken on.

This research data collection was carried out in several stages. First, direct observation in the field was conducted by visiting parties considered potential informants. Second, conducting interviews with informants as well as data sources. Informants were selected based on criteria such as natives who live in the research area, aged 20-60 years, and fluent in the local language (Afria & Lijawahirinisa, 2020; Warni & Afria, 2020, p. 88). In this study, the proverbs will be collected from informants who live in Tonsea, a sub-ethnic group of the Minahasa tribe. Geographically, Tonsea is located in North Minahasa Regency. Not all villages in the regency speak the language, and almost every village that does speak the language has slight differences in vocabulary used in conversations and the intonations of the speakers. The Tonsea language comprises several regional dialects, including Talawaan, Laikit, Airmadidi, Kalawat, and Tumulungtung. The samples of this population are taken from the Talawaan dialects.

The data analysis stage is conducted to identify the relationship between the data as a whole (Faruk, 2015, p. 24; Saputra & Qarimah, 2022, p. 231). The data was analyzed using hermeneutic approach because it is considered a theory that governs understanding. The researchers employed this hermeneutic to explain and interpret the expressions of the Minahasa language among the Tonsea sub-ethnic group. This research will also utilize semiotic theory to reveal the symbols in the proverbs, thereby deepening the meaning of the expressions themselves.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### A. Meaning of the Tonsea Proverbs as Oral Literature

The nature of literature is created by imagination and aesthetic elements, and so is it with oral literature or folklore. It is verbal art; art that use language as the medium. In the Tonsea proverbs listed below, the aesthetic values take as the important role. The values of culture meaning that hidden through the aesthetic expression of language; The value of local culture that can be understood by learning the oral traditions of the folk.

The proverbs were collected from informants as the representatives of the folk. The list of proverbs is also provided by the literal meaning or denotative meaning in Indonesian and English translation as well.

1. *Aiman tanu kakiki warisa wo mendam pedis.*  
*Tidak seperti tergigit cabai, pedas langsung terasa.*  
Unlike biting chili that the heat is directly felt.

The Minahasan people, including those from Tonsea, have a penchant for spicy food; however, the Proverb mentioned above pertains not to culinary preferences but to the delayed effects of one's actions. Whether good or bad, actions carry consequences, and responses inevitably arise from reactions, but the impact of these actions is not always immediate. In activities such as trading, farming, or even committing wrongful deeds, the repercussions may not be felt right away. It stands in contrast to the experience of consuming chili peppers, where the spiciness is instantly noticeable.

2. *Sa pispis tu'mid, pispis ma'an tiko/pispis palal, pispis tiko/ dembes kuku, dembes tiko.*  
*Jika basah kaki, basah tenggorokan.*  
If the feet are wets the throat is wet.

This Proverb imparts wisdom regarding the significance of hard work, contending that those who labor will meet their fundamental human needs, such as nourishment, which is metaphorically linked to the sensation of thirst in the throat. The throat serves as the passage through which food enters, and for many, consuming food without drinking can be a torment. The relief provided by water enhances the pleasure of eating. Thus, this expression subtly emphasizes the importance of work in truly savoring life's joys. Moreover, the phrase "wet feet" carries additional meaning, as it can be interpreted in connection with the dew on the grass where workers tread. Dew is typically associated with the early morning, when the sun has just risen, implying that workers should commence their tasks as early as possible.

3. *Ung kekoloan papekasaan u wendo wo u rendem.*  
*Tempat tidur itu tempat penggabungan capai dan sayang.*

Bed is a place of both exhaustion and affection.

This expression encourages married couples to alleviate their daily burdens in bed by letting go of fatigue and embracing affection. All issues should be addressed within the confines of the bedroom; disagreements should not linger once the couple rises in the morning. Conflicts need to be reconciled while the couple is together in bed. The bedroom, being the most private space in a home, serves not only as a place for intimacy but also as a sanctuary for resolving personal matters. Couples should prioritize open and honest communication with one another. Husbands, after a long day of work, should not retreat to bed simply out of exhaustion; instead, they should engage in meaningful conversation with their wives rather than ignore them.

4. *Sa mare'o mengelek parigimu sandiri, ta'kan ka endo-endo parigi ne tou.*

*Jika haus carilah sumurmu sendiri, jangan semauanya mengambil dari sumur orang lain.*

If you are thirsty, find your own well; do not arbitrarily take from someone else's well.

The people of Tonsea, particularly those in rural areas, largely depend on their gardens and crops for their livelihoods. This Proverb serves to remind individuals not to take advantage of others' hard work when they have the capacity or land to cultivate themselves. It encourages listeners to embrace independence and avoid greed. The term 'well' can also symbolize life; wells provide essential access to water, a vital resource for both individuals and communities. However, the quality and quantity of water from each well may vary, underscoring the Proverb's message about the importance of self-reliance. It encourages us to appreciate the resources we have rather than coveting what others possess, not because another's well might yield better water, but out of respect for hard work and fairness. If you find yourself dissatisfied with your current well, then dig deeper to discover the water you desire.

5. *Weanange senget meren.*

*Berikan semut merah di mata.*

Put an ant into the eye.

Imagine if an ant were to bite your eye. Undoubtedly, your eye would remain open, even as you drifted off to sleep. In such a scenario, the immediate reaction would be to wake up, instantly shaking off the grogginess. Open eyes heighten awareness of one's surroundings, which aligns with the underlying advice of the Proverb: it encourages a state of readiness for whatever life may throw your way, whether in a professional setting or other areas of life. One should not be deceived by what is visible but must remain vigilant about what lies beneath the surface. This guidance is particularly relevant for young individuals seeking to lead a fulfilling life, especially when it comes to forming meaningful friendships or finding life partners.

6. *Rumaji-rajing, wo tumido-tido.*

*Rajinlah dan cakap.*

Be diligent and skillful.

Straightforward yet relatable phrases "rajin" and "cakap" frequently appear in daily life. What is particularly intriguing is the arrangement of the words 'diligent' and 'capable', linked by the conjunction 'and'. Both hold equal prominence, signifying that they possess the same level of importance. A person must be both diligent and capable, as each trait is essential to the other.

7. *Saru tudu, tamburi mata.*  
*Menghadapi makanan masak, membelakangi makanan mentah.*  
Face cooked food, turn back on raw food.

This Proverb is often perceived as sarcastic by those who hear it, referring to an individual seen as lazy. This person typically seeks to benefit from the results of a collective effort without contributing to the work. Such behavior is commonly observed in Tonsea communities in rural areas where communal service is still a tradition. While villagers are engaged in cleaning up their environment, there are usually some individuals who choose to remain inactive or avoid participation. Once the cleaning is complete, these individuals often emerge to join in the communal meal shared by those who put in the effort.

8. *Sako mekeilek doit i teles cekalang, i teles tu roa.*  
*Jika kamu memperoleh uang untuk membeli ikan cakalang, belikanlah itu ikan roa.*  
If you get money to buy cakalang fish, buy roa fish instead.

In the expression above, two types of fish that symbolize the people of North Sulawesi, particularly the Minahasa tribe, are highlighted. These fish not only serve as a collective identity for the community but also represent distinct social classes, especially in the Tonsea region. Skipjack tuna is highly valued for its delicious meat, while Roa fish is regarded as a more modest option. As a result of this distinction, skipjack fish commands a higher price compared to Roa fish, and the ability to purchase or enjoy both types of fish often depends on one's economic status. While cakalang fish is favored among many, it is primarily accessible to the upper class. In contrast, those with limited financial means, belonging to the lower class, typically opt for the more affordable Roa fish.

The proverb serves as a valuable lesson for the younger generation, encouraging them to be frugal and wise with their spending. Young people should prioritize their needs over status. It also resonates with newly married couples, urging them to be astute and resourceful in their shopping habits. The journey of married life can be long and demanding, requiring significant attention, energy, and, of course, careful financial management.

9. *Seneilek, senade'ow.*  
*Dapat hari ini, habis hari ini.*  
Today income for today consumption.

The Proverb speaks to those who tend to squander their money or are prone to impulsive spending. It can also serve as a satire for individuals who prioritize immediate needs over long-term goals. Young people need to develop strong financial management skills to ensure that their hard work is not undermined as they grow older. By focusing on prestige and short-term desires without considering future needs, they may ultimately jeopardize their financial stability.

10. *Ta'kan tumood lowa ni ko'ko.*  
*Jangan bangun didahului oleh ayam.*  
Do not wake up before the roosters.

This proverb underscores the importance of diligence; it suggests that one should begin working before the dawn breaks and the chickens start to crow. The essence is that work should commence as early as possible, ideally before sunlight illuminates the sky, which is when chickens typically begin their morning calls. The arrival of dawn serves as a signal for initiating various activities, particularly work. Rising early offers an opportunity to prepare

both yourself and the tools needed for the tasks ahead. Additionally, the coolness of the morning can provide a refreshing sensation for the body after a restorative night's sleep.

11. *Mido' sepunen, mekeilek kemberen.*

*Melepaskan seseorang yang beringus, menemukan seseorang yang sakit mata.*

Leaving someone with a runny nose, finding someone with an eye disease.

A snotty person can be understood in various contexts, such as someone suffering from a cold or a general illness, or a person with a condition that affects their physical appearance. In the Tonsea community of the past, there were congenital diseases, such as excessive mucus production, that were notoriously difficult to treat, resulting in noticeable changes in appearance. Similarly, individuals with sore eyes are often seen as those who may be unwell or who struggle to discern between good and bad behavior. This notion primarily refers to those who are unable to differentiate right from wrong.

Upon closer examination, the Proverb contrasts two human qualities: the physically unhealthy individual, described as a "snotty person," and the person with sore eyes, who is healthy but lacks moral clarity. The advice conveyed through this saying is not to forsake friends with physical disabilities in favor of those with reckless behavior who defy societal norms. This wisdom extends to young people in their pursuit of romantic relationships, urging them not to abandon their partners due to physical shortcomings or appearances that do not match their expectations. Instead, emphasis should be placed on the moral integrity of individuals, regardless of whether they conform to traditional standards of attractiveness.

Ultimately, this analysis highlights the importance of good behavior, guided by sound values, over physical appearance. The Proverb elevates the importance of virtuous actions above mere physical condition.

12. *Sa tuama, tumua-tuama.*

*Jika laki-laki, harus menjadi laki-laki yang hebat.*

If you are a man, you have to be a great man.

The proverb advises men to act according to their inherent nature. Traditionally, men are seen as leaders of the family and a foundational support for women. The term "great man" encompasses a broad interpretation, signifying not only a person's status but also their conduct. Men are expected to exhibit agility and strength while also embodying gentleness in their behavior. A man is expected to possess these qualities by nature rather than striving to develop them later. This Proverb can also serve as a reminder to husbands, urging them to fulfill their role as the head of the household. A husband should diligently provide for the family's needs and show affection toward his wife, while also maintaining firmness in the face of any wrongdoing.

13. *Ai' daoken ne tu'a, daoken ne rinte.*

*Yang tidak dapat dijangkau oleh orang tua, terjangkau oleh anak-anak.*

What is unachievable by parents, can be reached by children.

The proverb is expressed as a wish that a child's experiences will surpass those of their parents. It can pertain to various aspects of life, such as economic, social, or educational opportunities. On one hand, it serves as motivation for parents to strive for their children's futures, ensuring they have a better life than what they have known. For instance, if parents were unable to receive a complete education, they should work to guarantee that their children attain a university degree. Beyond familial guidance, this Proverb can also be

applied more broadly to encourage the current generation to foster improved social conditions for the next, helping them avoid the same hardships faced by their predecessors.

14. *Menengteng-nengtengo wo mai de'owen.*  
*Diam saja lalu mendapatkan makanan.*  
Do nothing and you can get the food.

The Proverb is a somewhat sarcastic way of telling someone to be quiet, aimed at offending those who prefer to remain inactive and avoid making efforts to meet their needs. The structure of the sentence is striking, with the word "silence" placed at the beginning and "food" at the end, creating a stark contrast between the two concepts. Silence signifies inaction, lack of effort, or work, while "makanan" (food) highlights that acquiring food requires action or labor. Ultimately, this Proverb conveys the idea that work is essential for obtaining food and fulfilling basic needs, whereas silence leads to neither hunger nor poverty.

15. *Sapu-saputen mekele'os.*  
*Bungkuslah sebaik-baiknya.*  
Wrap it as best you can.

The Proverb can be applied to individuals who frequently share the shortcomings of others, such as friends, family, or their partners. This Proverb can also serve as a warning to keep a secret from others' knowledge. To delve deeper, this Proverb is particularly suitable for married couples, especially those who are new or young. Both partners must be good at keeping their partner's shortcomings private so that other people, including family members such as parents or relatives, are not aware of them. The wrapping in question not only covers the appearance or shape but also closes tightly, so that the aroma does not escape, and people are unaware of what is happening in domestic life. Wrapped items can be interpreted as rotten items that can disturb the smell of others, so it can also be understood as bad things that exist in the family.

16. *Sa ko mekereseno un dai' karesenan, toumo ko.*  
*Jika kamu sudah bisa merasakan yang tidak dapat dirasakan oleh orang lain, kamu sudah menjadi orang.*  
If you can feel what other cannot, you have become a person.

Being *orang* can be understood as embodying success, but it should not be equated solely with wealth or material possessions. In the context of the aforementioned proverbial sentence, the term "person" refers to an ideal or perfect human being. To strive towards this ideal is to cultivate the capacity to empathize and to take responsibility for the challenges we face, especially when others may fall short in that regard. Success, therefore, is reflected in our responses to the problems we encounter; it is assessed through our behavior, actions, and thought processes, rather than through material achievements like wealth or possessions.

17. *Pa dangkoyman lako mbeya un toroman idangkoy.*  
*Lewatkan saja semua yang dapat dilewatkan.*  
Just skip everything that can be skipped.

The Proverb encourages us not to invest too much concern in matters that lack significance and even suggests the importance of letting go of things that are no longer useful. Additionally, it offers wisdom for married couples when facing challenges; regardless of how trivial a problem may be, it is essential to find enjoyment in the situation. Much like

eating, if there are parts of a meal that are unpalatable, it is best to swallow them rather than complain, as this can lead to further complications. This Proverb has broader applications in life, including the workplace. If a new leader is not particularly well-liked, it is beneficial for subordinates to accept their presence and work effectively with them.

18. *Tea'man kepera-peras ketan ne tou.*  
*Jangan hanya semaunya mengambil nira orang lain.*  
Do not arbitrarily take other's "nira".

The Proverb is identical to number 4, which prohibits the arbitrary taking of someone's property. What makes this expression particularly interesting is that 'Nira' refers to the sap from palm trees. Nira can be transformed into traditional drinks (saguer) and brown sugar, which, when sold, can generate economic value for the owner. However, the process of extracting Nira is quite challenging, requiring careful separation and timing to identify the right part at the right moment. This task demands considerable experience, which does not come easily. Thus, taking someone else's Nira, as illustrated in the Proverb, represents more than just stealing a source of livelihood; it also signifies undermining the patience and perseverance required to cultivate it.

19. *Daked doit, daked karia, aimo sapa doit, tamburian ne karia.*  
*Banyak uang banyak teman, habis uangnya, dibelakangi teman.*  
Much money you have, many more friends you'll get; no money, no friends.

The expression highlights the benefits of having wealth or possessions and the consequences of their absence. Money tends to draw the attention of many individuals, leading them to follow anyone who possesses it. On the flip side, when the money disappears, even those who profess to be friends may abandon you. This saying serves as a reminder to be discerning and wise in selecting and evaluating friendships. Often, you may encounter someone who only socializes or jokes with you while you are financially thriving, but who will vanish when they discover that your funds have dwindled. Just as sugar on the floor attracts ants, so too does money attract people; without it, you may find yourself alone.

20. *Sa makaria karia ne kutun me kutun.*  
*Jika berteman dengan yang berketu, maka akan terjangkit kutu.*  
If you befriend with someone with lice, you will be infected by lice.

The Proverb serves as a piece of advice from parents to their children or young individuals. It highlights how the environment can significantly influence a person's character, nature, or behavior, particularly within friendships. The importance of carefully selecting friends is emphasized, as negative influences can lead to harm. Implicitly, it also discourages associating with ill-tempered individuals. The term 'lice' carries a negative connotation, potentially referring to head lice. Those infested with lice are often viewed as individuals who neglect personal hygiene. Additionally, lice can spread like viruses; one may not have lice initially, but if they sleep on a pillow used by someone with lice, they can become infested despite maintaining their cleanliness. It serves as a reminder that poor choices in selecting companionship can lead to undesirable consequences.

21. *Doit naan tetelew, maan sia nei selet mesesendow sia.*  
*Uang ada sayapnya, meskipun sudah disembuyikan dia akan mencoba untuk terbang.*  
Money has wings; even if you hide it, it will try to fly away.

The Proverb contains the personification of money having wings, which means that it can be interpreted as being able to walk alone, disappearing like a bird that escapes from the drum. Further personification occurs in the use of the pronoun 'he' (in Indonesian, a third-person pronoun), who has the power to try to live like a living being. Married couples can use this expression to manage their finances effectively. In addition to being careful with their finances, they must also be prudent in their spending, even when they have a substantial amount of money or assets. Because often people do not realise that the money they have is just a little bit left.

22. *Nggenang ai' ma tu'a.*  
*Pikiran tidak pernah tua.*  
The mind never gets old.

The human body consists of a body that is identical to the materialistic and abstract mind. The human body often changes, such as aging, over time, but this is distinct from the state of mind, which is considered to remain relatively unchanged. This Proverb is very suitable for people who have aged and often forget about their old condition. It is because of the habits they developed as young adults, such as working hard, that they continue to do those things in their old age. At the same time, physical abilities are distinct from mental abilities, which appear to improve over time. In a way, this Proverb also puts the mind in a superior position to the body. However, one must also be wary of ignoring the physical abilities that have declined and instead prioritizing the power of the mind. One should not push oneself in life and adjust to one's age.

23. *Tana' dai ma daked, tou ma daked.*  
*Tanah tidak bertambah banyak, orang bertambah banyak.*  
The land does not increase but people do.

The Proverb is advice not just to sell property, such as land. The land in question could be a plantation, a house site, or inherited land. There is an interesting comparison in this Proverb, land and people. Land does not have the reproductive qualities of people who are born every second. Land does not live like people, so selling land is economically beneficial. However, keep in mind that the price of land often fluctuates annually and tends to increase over time. When selling a piece of land this year and then buying it back next year, it will likely fetch a higher price than it did before.

The Proverb is often given to married couples at the beginning of their marriage. In Tonsea marriages (in general, Minahasa), there is a tradition where the groom's family gives land (a kind of dowry) to the bride as an effort to win the favor of the woman's family. The land is expected not to be sold in the future, but to be cultivated as a source of livelihood for both the husband and wife. The land should be increased so that future descendants can enjoy it.

24. *Sela tambu, sela leput.*  
*Telaga besar, pembuangan airpun besar.*  
A large pond, also a large drainage.

The Proverb advises to live a balanced life between income and expenditure. The more wealth we have, the more we should give to those in need. Telaga is an example in this Proverb; if a lake does not have a good drain hole when it rains heavily, it will cause flooding, which will harm many parties and can even damage the lake itself. The use of the word 'telaga' in this Proverb is quite interesting; indeed, North Sulawesi is also a region

famous for having many telag. A lake is like a pond made of natural phenomena in which many living things can live, but it still requires a suitable waste channel to balance the state of the lake itself. Moreover, the source of water in general comes from rainfall. The more frequent the rainfall, the more hazardous the ecosystem that inhabits it.

25. *Tumere-teren paendon esa keong.*

*Luruslah supaya berjalan satu arah.*

Be straight so you can walk in one direction.

The Proverb is advice to live straight in order to be on the right track to reach the destination. In a way, this Proverb is inspired by the ox cart, which used to be a means of transportation for the Minahasa people, especially in Tonsea. This ox cart consists of two wheels attached to the body of the cart and pulled by two cows walking hand in hand. The phrase *esa keong* can also be interpreted as "one pull," namely from the cow. For the cart to be able to walk according to its existing purpose, the two cows must be in the same direction and parallel to each other. Both must be the same size and walk with the same accompaniment. For them to be aligned, the wood that connects them must also be aligned. This Proverb also implies that to navigate life, not only must one capitalise on intentions, but also have tools that are truly ready to help on the journey.

26. *Aiman koman sakean punya, punya sakean ta.*

*Jangan sampaikan kita dinaiki oleh kepunyaan kita, kita yang menaikinya.*

Do not let your own mount you, we mount them.

Working is a necessity for humans to fulfil their needs, whether they work as farmers, merchants, or traders. However, people often become too busy with work that they miss the essence of life or overlook their responsibilities in other aspects of life. Often, a husband is busy working to accumulate wealth so that his family does not feel deprived, but he forgets to spend time with his wife and children, whom he often ignores when he is at home. Work causes him to neglect his responsibilities as a husband and father, creating distance between him and his wife and children. Life does require money, and to earn money, you have to work. However, it is essential to remember that money is not everything. This Proverb is very suitable for husbands who often do not make time for their families and instead prioritise work.

27. *Kumar-kar mekele'os paendon aiman patundu meren.*

*Mencakar dengan sebaik-baiknya agar tidak hanya ikut mata.*

At best, you can claw at it, so you will not just be feasting your eyes on other people.

The Proverb does not explain what kind of clawing, but it can be indicated that the clawing in question is clawing like chickens do. Village chickens, in general, often scratch the ground to find food. This Proverb suggests that the food found on the ground is not enough to warrant efforts such as clawing to obtain it. In life, it is like that; one must work carefully, skillfully, and cleverly in order to get what one wants, instead of working only with the eyes. The phrase 'does not just follow the meaning' eyes, seeing the success that others achieve. Do not just want or be tempted by other people's success or wealth, but do not want to work hard like that person did. To achieve success, you must work diligently.

28. *Sedangpe semeketerno pa ka sunduy pe, wo'pe se mareko-reko.*

*Sedangkan orang yang sudah berjalan lurus masih bisa tersandung, apalagi yang berjalan bengkok.*

While those who walk a straight path can still stumble, even more so for those who walk crookedly.

The Proverb is a piece of advice about living life well, even when you have done so, sometimes you still fall into a pit of misery. This Proverb can also be a warning to those who underestimate social and religious norms, those who live without regard for existing rules, and those who do not heed the common interest. Living life requires thorough preparation; one walks with the right and necessary provisions. In life, there are many trials, and humans often require assistance from various individuals and organizations.

29. *Tawi moka teka'an ne kekoak mena numa.*  
*Hampir menjadi tempat bertengger burung gagak di kebun.*  
Almost become raven's place to perch in the field.

Crows represent many things. In Western or European cultures, crows symbolise bad luck, death, or doom. Nevertheless, in Minahas or Tonse culture, crows can be associated with a person's work ethic. Generally, crows roost in the morning and evening in the jungle. The subject being discussed in the Proverb above is a worker. This worker works very diligently from morning to evening, which is implied by the time the crows roost. Something interesting is revealed in this Proverb: the crow is not a tame animal that approaches humans. By positioning the worker as the crow's perch, it means that the worker is working so hard that the crow becomes tame enough to approach him. It could be that the labourer consistently comes to the garden or forest every day, so that the crow considers the labourer as part of the forest.

30. *Sa mengelek kepar sikolan meke le'os.*  
*Jika mencari pasangan harus pelajari dengan baik.*  
When looking for a partner, one should study carefully.

This Proverb is addressed to young people who intend to find a life partner, and they should assess and consider it carefully and cautiously. The word *sikolan* in the Proverb above is the word school. In decades past, schooling for the people of Tonse was not as easy as it is today. Those who attended school had to leave the village if they wanted to continue their education, even at the primary school level. Many had to live with relatives or people who were considered successful in urban areas. They not only attend school but also have to do household chores, such as cooking, sweeping, or washing clothes. It requires a lot of patience, tenacity, and determination, as many fail. Connecting this Proverb with the condition of schooling at that time, when dancing for a mate, one must have patience and even be prepared to sacrifice a short time.

Proverbs reflecting marriage values can be found in Numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21, 23, 24, 25, and 27. Notable examples include "Sa pispis tu'mid, pispis ma'an tiko" (no. 2), "Rumaji-rajing wo tumido-tido" (no. 6), "Ta'kan tumo'od lowo ni ko'ko" (no. 10), and "Kumar-kar mekele'os paendon aiman patundu meren" (no. 27). The moral lessons implied in proverbs 2 and 10 emphasize the importance of diligence in securing one's sustenance.

Tonse is abundant in natural resources, providing individuals with unrestricted access to a diverse range of natural food sources, including vegetables, fish, fruits, and other nutritious options. One such vegetable, known locally as *paku* or in Indonesian as *pakis* (a type of fern), is widely found across fields and farms. Within Tonse culture, individuals are permitted to harvest these vegetables even from land not their own, without being labeled as thieves. There exists an unspoken understanding that facilitates this practice. The motivation for this lies in the high market value and rarity of these vegetables. As a

result, there is intense competition among people to acquire these valuable resources. This competition requires considerable effort, often compelling individuals to rise early to search the fields for scattered vegetables. Those who are diligent and proactive in their pursuits can reap the rewards, while those who remain idle may miss out as others take the opportunity to gather the harvest.

Proverb number 6 exhibits similarities with those mentioned in the preceding paragraph but encompasses broader implications. The core value remains consistent: diligence. In Proverbs 6, the concept is broadly emphasized, whereas in Proverbs 27, it is delineated more specifically. The latter implies that diligence leads to financial prosperity, enabling one to spend the earnings at their discretion, thereby empowering individuals to enjoy financial freedom, not merely observing others exercising such privileges. Some other marriage values are implied in these proverbs. Ung kekolo'an papekasaan u wendu wo u rendem (no.3), Sa mare'o mengelek parigimu sandiri, ta'kan ka endo-endo parigi ne tou (no.4), Mido' sepunen, mekeilek kemberen (no. 11), Sapu-saputen mekale'os (no. 15), and Padangkoyman lako mbeyaun toroman idangkoy (no.17). The aforementioned proverbs share common themes emphasizing the importance of unconditional love and commitment within marriage. They underscore the significance of not abandoning one's spouse under any circumstances, promoting forgiveness and the ability to let go of grievances.

Proverb number 15 adopts a particularly assertive stance, underscoring the importance of exercising utmost discretion regarding marital matters; no outside influence should be privy to the challenges encountered within the marriage. Meanwhile, Proverbs 11 highlights that leaving a spouse for a specific reason does not guarantee the discovery of a better relationship, reflecting the intricacy of marital decisions and their potential consequences. Another value of marriage highlighted in the Proverbs is the importance of being watchful, wise, thrifty, and honest. Key verses such as Weanange senget meren (no. 5), Sako mekeilek doi I teles cekalang, I teles tu roa (no. 8), Doit na'an tetelew, ma'an sia nei selet mesesendow (no. 21), Tana dai' ma daked, tou ma daked (no. 23), and Sela tmbu, sela leput (no. 24) emphasize the significance of vigilance and prudence. Metaphorically, these verses emphasize the importance of spouses being attentive and foresighted about their future. Instead of yielding to the whims of fate, they are encouraged to shape their destinies, as suggested in Proverbs 23, actively. Furthermore, valuable life lessons can be gleaned from the proverbs listed in Numbers 1, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 26, 28, 29, and 30. These proverbs impart essential virtues, including responsibility, resilience, honesty, diligence, and wisdom. Embracing these principles not only cultivates a commendable character but also nurtures integrity, thereby laying a strong foundation for a promising and prosperous future.

## B. The Symbols in Proverbs

People reside in a diverse world rich in languages and cultures. When we communicate, whether in written or spoken form, we employ both denotative and connotative language. Connotation adds depth and intensity to our conversations, making them intriguing and profound. Often, the use of signs and symbols in discourse is subconscious, originating from our familiarity with them, as they become ingrained in our minds through regular use. Metaphors, for instance, find their way into our daily conversations and are particularly prevalent in proverbs, often without our conscious awareness.

In Peirce's theory of signs, there is a typology of signs, starting with three forms of existence, three classifications of signs, each with a triad. The first *trikotomy* is from the perspective of the representamen, where signs are divided into *qualisigns* (qualities inherent in signs), *sinisigns* (the existence of objects or events), and *legisigns* (conventions stating signs). The second *trikotomy* is seen from the relationship between representamen (signifier) and object (signified). There are three types of signs: (1) icons, which are *representamens* that only have similarity or resemblance to their objects, (2) indexes, which are *representamens* that have a causal relationship with their objects, and (3) symbols, which are *representamens* based on conventions. The third *trikotomy* is seen from the interpretant. Signs consist of rhemes (signs containing possibilities), *dicents* (signs corresponding to reality), and arguments (signs indicating truth based on convention).

Based on Peirce's theory of the three types of signs—icon, index and symbol— the meaning of the aforementioned proverbs will be elucidated. The use of symbols will signify the meaning contextually, reflecting the nuances of thought. The use of symbols in Tonsea proverbs definitely indicate the relation with the local culture. Such symbols that are revealed in the proverbs are as follow.

1. *Warisa (cabai/ chili)* in the proverb, *aiman tanu kakiki warisa wo mendam pedis*.  
*Warisa* or chili is the most important ingredient in Minahasa culinary. Hardly any Minahasa people can enjoy their meals without chili. The chili in Tonsea cuisine is also quite different with other culinary, for instance, in Java. The chili in Tonsea culinary is smaller in shape but significantly hotter.
2. *Parigi (sumur/well)* in the proverb, *sa mare'o mengelek parigimu sandiri, ta'kan ka endo-endo parigi ne tou*.  
Access to clean water has always been crucial for human survival, particularly in the past. Nearly every household used to have its own well. In situations where houses were not enclosed by fences, sharing a well was a common practice. Wells were typically situated along the borders of the fields between neighboring houses. This arrangement ensured that everyone had access to this vital resource, fostering a sense of community and mutual reliance.
3. *Cekalang (ikan Cakalang/ Cakalang fish)* in the proverb, *sasako mekeilek doit i teles cekalang, i teles tu roa*.  
Cakalang fish is a prominent dish in Minahasa cuisine, known for its unique flavors. Typically enjoyed fresh, it holds a special place in the culinary heritage of the region. However, it is the smoked variety of Cakalang fish that is especially favored by many. The smoking process enhances its taste, making it a popular choice among food enthusiasts.
4. *Roa (ikan Roa/ Roa fish)* in the proverb, *sako mekeilek doit i teles cekalang, i teles tu roa*.  
Roa fish is another culinary delicacy in Minahasa, offering its own distinct appeal. However, in comparison to Cakalang fish, Roa is smaller in size and more affordable.
5. *Tambu (kolam/ fish pond)* in the proverb, *sela tambu, sela leput*.  
Fish farming is one of Tonsea people's occasion. Among the various fishes bred and cultivated, goldfish and tilapia are especially notable. The Tonsea sub-ethnic group is blessed with abundant natural resources, including fertile farms, expansive paddy fields, and numerous ponds. These resources sustain their livelihood.

6. *Leput* (*pembuangan air/* waterway) in the proverb, *sela tambu, sela leput*  
In the correlation with the aforementioned pond, *leput* is very crucial. The drainage and the ponds should be proportional. Proper proportionality ensures efficient water flow, preventing waterlogging and maintaining optimal conditions for the fish. A well-designed drainage system is fundamental for effective water management, ensuring the overall health and productivity of the aquatic environment in fish farms.
7. *Kekoak* (*burung gagak/* Common raven) in the proverb, *tawi moka teka'an ne kekoak mena numa*  
Common ravens are often spotted in farms, perching on coconut trees and other types of trees. Farmers appreciate their presence as these birds play a valuable role in pest control. By naturally preying on pests that infest coconut trees, ravens help farmers in eradicating harmful insects and maintaining the health of their crops. This symbiotic relationship underscores the importance of these birds in agricultural settings, making them beneficial allies for farmers.

## CONCLUSION

The Tonsea proverbs serve as a source of guidance, offering succinct expressions of wisdom, particularly aimed at the younger generation. Targeted guidance emphasises the cultivation of lasting principles and the promotion of continuous self-improvement, especially in the realm of matrimony, to enhance its durability. Conversely, universal guidance encompasses foundational principles that individuals should adopt to foster personal growth and achieve a meaningful existence. The insights presented hold relevance for individuals across the entire spectrum of age, from the young to the elderly, underscoring their fundamental importance in influencing human behaviour and the processes of decision-making.

The symbols present in proverbs are profoundly embedded in the cultural fabric of Tonsea. As a result, their presence holds considerable importance among the speakers of the Tonsea language. The significance of these symbols is deep and complex, intricately woven into the fabric of daily existence, offering a wealth of cultural depth and insight. When intricately interlaced within proverbs, they exert a significant impact on the collective society. Proverbs serve as a conduit for preserving cultural values and traditions, facilitating the transmission of knowledge across generations. Through the utilization of well-known symbols, these proverbs profoundly connect with individuals, strengthening their cultural identity and offering significant reflections on existence, knowledge, and heritage.

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